# ABSTRACT

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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN SUBURBAN AND URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS: THE EFFECTS OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Advisor: Professor Trevor Turner

Dissertation dated December 2007

This quantitative study examines possible effects of discipline and behavior, perceptions of discipline policies, and socioeconomic status on academic achievement of students enrolled in suburban and urban high schools. It was undertaken to examine the following theories: (a) suburban high school students, in comparison to urban high school students, have a higher rate of achievement on standardized tests; (b) suburban high school students are more self-disciplined than urban high school students; (c) students of low socioeconomic status not only perform at a rate below students of middle to high socioeconomic status, they are referred for disciplinary action more (Levin, 2004)

A comparative analysis was used to determine if the perceptions were valid. Existing related literature and academic and disciplinary records were reviewed. A survey

was also conducted on student perception of school disciplinary policies. The researcher found that the theories, in all probability, are based on the premise that suburban students fit the "suburban" mold--they reside in suburban neighborhoods and are not subject to the problems and concerns of students who live in the inner city. Their parents are more educated and have higher paying jobs. They are more culturally enriched and are assumed to have higher morals. The findings of this study, however, were inconclusive and did not fully support the existing literature—possibly due to the rezoning of school boundaries where students of all economic levels are transported to schools outside of their neighborhoods. This is not only the situation in the county in which this study was conducted, it is also in other school districts with similar demographics where rezoning appears to be the norm. Thus, it appears that some school districts have successfully integrated their schools. This researcher's initial theory was that disparities exist between urban and suburban high school students. However, it appears that it was influenced by dilapidated urban school buildings as opposed to modernized suburban school buildings. One implication of the findings of this study is that students can achieve wherever they attend school, regardless of socioeconomic status. Another implication is that the decision to act appropriately is a choice and is not associated with socioeconomic status or school location. Data from this study can be used to increase the awareness of educators that the terms "suburban" and "urban" may need to be redefined if the rezoning movement continues.

# STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN SUBURBAN AND URBAN HIGH SCHOOLS: THE EFFECTS OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ON BEHAVIOR AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

DECEMBER 2007

R.X T. 118

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude to Bertha, my wife, who so patiently journeyed with me through it all and provided much needed assistance. A special thanks to Alisha and Felicia, my two daughters, who are the wind beneath my wings. Also, humble thanks to Helen Bentley Ashley, my mother, and Dr. Willie Marion Ashley, my older sibling for their support. Sincere thanks to Mr. Richard Mathis, my former principal, for inspiring me to become a school administrator and providing the opportunity to serve in that capacity. Finally, many thanks to Cheryl Hitchcock, my typist and editor, and the members of my committee who provided guidance from the beginning to the end.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Purpose of the Study

In the past five years, disciplinary referrals which require a visit to the administrator's office have been at an all-time high in urban schools. However, it appears to not be the case in suburban schools. Reports show that students enrolled in suburban schools achieve at higher rates than students enrolled in urban schools. In addition, most of the students enrolled in urban schools live below or just above poverty level, while most of the students enrolled in suburban schools live above average poverty level (*Student Achievement*, 2007).

In the two schools studied, the students were tested in the following courses during the spring of 2005: Algebra I, American Literature and Composition, Ninth Grade Literature and Composition, Biology, Economics/Business/Free Enterprise, Geometry, Physical Science, and U. S. History. The results from those tests are presented in Table 1. Table 2 depicts the total number of disciplinary referrals recorded for students enrolled in the two schools during the spring of 2005. The comparative charts reveal inconsistent results between the two high schools.

A comparative analysis of disciplinary referrals in the urban and suburban high schools in this study reveals identical infractions. Table 2a shows the total number of students enrolled in the two schools during the 2004-2005 school years and the total number of discipline referrals. Type of offenses and number of infractions are depicted in Table 2b.

Table 1

Spring 2005 End of Course Test (EOCT) Mean Scale Scores

| | Alg | Am Lit | 9th Lit | Bio | Econ | Geom | Phy Sci | U.S. His |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Urban HS | 578.45 | 623.87 | 605.63 | 597.99 | 576.96 | 577.95 | 596.46 | 604.03 |
| Suburban HS | 607.20 | 635.82 | 623.03 | 612.08 | 612.75 | 600.80 | 610.54 | 629.04 |
| State | 618.00 | 634.00 | 621.00 | 622.00 | 615.00 | 616.00 | 616.00 | 626.00 |

*Students must have a scale score of 600 in order to meet standards and 630 or above to exceed standards (Georgia Department of Education, 2005).

Table 1 reveals that students enrolled in the urban high school at the site of this study met standards on three of the EOCTs—American Literature, Ninth Grade Literature, and U. S. History. However, they did not meet the state mean scale score in any of the courses tested. The table also reveals students enrolled in the suburban high school at the site of this study met standards in all of the courses tested and exceeded the standards in one course—American Literature.

Table 2a

2004-2005 Discipline Referrals/Total Student Population

| Type of High School | Total Discipline Referrals | Student Population |
|---|---|---|
| Urban | 2490 | 1026 |
| Suburban | 13,385 | 1668 |

Table 2b identifies the type of infractions and the number of student violations committed at each school. The urban school infractions are far below those shown for the suburban school because the suburban school's discipline clerk entered all infractions, including those where administrative action was taken. The urban school's discipline clerk, however, entered only the infractions on which administrative action was taken. The researcher (after numerous visits to the school district's Research Department) was informed that the SASI program could not generate a separate list of infractions showing only those on which administrative action was taken for the suburban school.

Table 2b

Number of Infractions by Type of Offense - Urban and Suburban

2004-2005

| Offense | Urban | Suburban |
|---|---|---|
| Arson | 0 | 0 |
| Battery | 0 | 2 |
| Bomb Threat | 0 | 0 |
| Burglary | 0 | 1 |
| Cheating | 2 | 20 |
| Computer Trespass | 2 | 31 |
| Cutting Class | 335 | 375 |
| Dispns Sub Alcohol | 0 | 0 |
| Dispns Dist | 0 | 0 |
| Tobacco Pro | | |

Table 2b Continued

Number of Infractions by Type of Offense - Urban and Suburban

2004-2005

| Offense | Urban | Suburban |
|---|---|---|
| Dress Code Viola | 261 | 2716 |
| Excess Tardiness | 215 | 5188 |
| Extortion | 0 | 0 |
| Fail to serve detention | 74 | 2620 |
| Fighting | 92 | 92 |
| Homicide | 0 | 0 |
| In Lieu of CP | 0 | 0 |
| Intox/ Sub | 3 | 0 |
| Kidnapping | 0 | 0 |
| Larceny/ Theft | 1 | 12 |

Table 2b Continued

Number of Infractions by Type of Offense - Urban and Suburban

2004-2005

| Offense | Urban | Suburban |
|---|---|---|
| Miscon | 727 | 1227 |
| Robbery | 0 | 0 |
| Motor Veh | 1 | 0 |
| Sell | 0 | 1 |
| Theft | | |
| Substance | | |
| Obscene | 0 | 2 |
| Selling | 0 | 0 |
| Behv | | |
| Alcohol | | |
| Other | 197 | 38 |
| Sex Harass | 4 | 2 |
| Porno | 1 | 2 |
| Poss III | 0 | 4 |
| Object | | |
| Poss of | 1 | 1 |
| Alcohol | | |
| Poss of | 12 | 10 |
| Tobacco | | |
| Poss Sub | 3 | 8 |
| Profanity | 133 | 184 |

Table 2b Continued

Number of Infractions by Type of Offense - Urban and Suburban

2004-2005

| Offense | Urban | Suburban |
|---|---|---|
| Sex Offenses | 0 | 2 |
| Sexual Battery | 0 | 0 |
| Smoking III Sub | 7 | 3 |
| Smoking Tobacco | 50 | 11 |
| Threat/ In timid | 4 | 18 |
| Trespass | 0 | 3 |
| Truancy | 21 | 4 |
| Vandal | 3 | 0 |
| Violence | 2 | 3 |
| Willful | 330 | 798 |

Table 2b Continued

Number of Infractions by Type of Offense - Urban and Suburban

2004-2005

| Offense | Urban | Suburban |
|---|---|---|
| Disobed | | |
| Wepns | 0 | 0 |
| Poss | | |
| Hdgn | | |
| Wpns Poss | 8 | 3 |
| Knf | | |
| Wpns Poss | 0 | 0 |
| Rifle | | |
| Totals | 2489 | 13,381 |

The majority of the students enrolled in the urban high school at the site of this study are economically disadvantaged. Seventy-eight percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Conversely, 45% of the students enrolled in the suburban school at the site of this study are eligible for free or reduced lunch. These statistics are generally characteristic of urban and suburban schools and may in fact have some influence on other factors. Two such factors are believed to be behavior and academic performance.

Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the impact of socioeconomic status on student discipline and achievement in urban and suburban high schools.

## Background of the Problem

For more than 30 years, student discipline has been a major issue of concern in inner city high schools. Monthly, approximately 3% of teachers and students in urban schools experience physical injuries serious enough to require medical attention (Harvard Education Letter, 1987). While fatal shooting incidents caused by students in the nation's schools have forced policymakers to reexamine student discipline policies, they have also been forced to reexamine the composition of the varied student populations.

Approximately one-quarter of the nation's 80,000 plus school buildings are located in central cities. Thus, more than 11 million, or 24% of the 46 million children enrolled in America's public schools attend school in an urban district (Harvard Education Letter, 1987). Characteristics shared by urban schools include large class sizes, social and disciplinary problems, and minimal parental involvement. A large percentage of the student population is poor and of a minority race. In addition, students enrolled in urban schools generally perform below average on standardized tests. Urban schools also experience high absenteeism, tardiness, and dropout rates. A high incidence of related problems in school environments such as drug use, cheating, insubordination, truancy, and intimidation also exists in urban schools. The results are countless disruptions that lead to nearly two million suspensions per year (Harvard Education Letter, 1987).

In addition to these school discipline issues, American classrooms are frequently plagued by many minor acts which disrupt the flow of classroom activities and interfere with learning. Cotton (1990) found that approximately one-half of all classroom time is

used on activities other than instruction, and discipline problems are responsible for a significant portion of this lost instructional time.

Examining urban school history, it is clear that problems related to student discipline have been around for almost as long as schools have been in existence (Noguera, 1995). To a large extent, it is because urban public schools have traditionally served poor children, and many poor children generally exhibit behaviors learned in the environment in which they live. They generally resolve conflict as they see it resolved in their neighborhoods. They also have a tendency to disrespect authority figures and have no regard for rules. This may be in part because positive role models are rarely present in the neighborhoods in which they live.

Many teachers who teach in urban schools do not live in the communities where they work. Thus, they have limited knowledge of what their students' lives are like outside of school. This gap is often compounded by differences based on race and class. These factors add to the inability of teachers and school personnel to respond effectively to discipline problems. These teachers and other school personnel cannot fathom students acting out because they are hungry or may not have seen their mother or father for days. It seems incomprehensible to them that some students exhibit inappropriate behavior because they simply do not know appropriate behavior or have never seen it modeled.

Trends across the nation reveal that the usual punishments for exhibiting inappropriate behavior in the classroom are almost meaningless to many students enrolled in urban schools. Threatening to suspend or expel a student who has already experienced failure in school or who may not attend regularly literally means nothing to the student. However, this continues to be the major method used in dealing with

discipline problems. Too often, these teenagers are forced into the streets with no education or skills and are left to survive by any means necessary. Law enforcement charges have recently become another form of punishment in the wake of so many discipline problems. Most school districts now employ law enforcement personnel who work on school premises each day.

## Statement of the Problem

Disparities in student discipline and achievement exist in urban and suburban high schools. Until the real reason for the disparities are found and properly addressed, urban school administrators' desks will remain cluttered with disciplinary referrals. They will also be cluttered with below average standardized test results on students who live at or below poverty level.

## Significance of the Study

The collected data could be used to develop a model discipline plan that will encourage administrators to examine covert and overt behavioral problems exhibited by the students. It might give inexperienced administrators a better understanding of how to discipline and serve to remind experienced administrators to consider the best interest of the students when making decisions concerning discipline or when applying school board disciplinary policies. In addition, it could assist school administrators in locating the student support services needed to correct adverse behavioral problems, thus resulting in the desired outcome--improved academic achievement.

## Research Questions

This study examines the following research questions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the number of disciplinary referrals on suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to the number of disciplinary referrals on urban high school students of low, middle, high socioeconomic status?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in student perception of school board discipline policies of suburban high school students of low, middle,

and high socioeconomic status in comparison to student perception of school board discipline policies of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status?

3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the math End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the math EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have also been referred for disciplinary action?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the language arts End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the language arts EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the social studies End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the social studies EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?
6. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the science End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and

high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the science EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?

7. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students' discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?
8. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the social studies EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students' discipline referrals and performance on the social studies EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?
9. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the science EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students in comparison to discipline referrals and performance on the science EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?
10. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the math EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students in comparison to discipline referrals and performance on the math EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?

## Summary

National and local reports continue to reveal that students enrolled in urban schools are referred for disciplinary action more often and at higher rates than students

enrolled in suburban schools. Students enrolled in urban schools also tend to score below average on standardized tests when compared to students enrolled in suburban schools. Another comparison reveals that a high percentage of students enrolled in urban schools receive free or reduced lunch as opposed to students enrolled in suburban schools. Thus, the purpose of this study was to provide answers to key questions related to the aforementioned variables which had to be examined in order to improve the grim statistics. It was also the intent of this study to determine the impact of socioeconomics, which appears to be a contributing factor to the corresponding variables. More importantly, the purpose of this study was to examine what must be done to improve overall student achievement and discipline in urban schools.

The results will add to existing research on socioeconomics and its relationship to student discipline and achievement. Additionally, the results will not only aid the local board of education in establishing county-wide discipline policies, they will aid school-level administrators in processing the various infractions while implementing school and county-wide disciplinary policies. Further, the results will assist all involved in the educational process in understanding the reasons for some of the disparities in urban and suburban schools, especially in the areas of student discipline and achievement.

Detailed information from various studies on student discipline, achievement, and socioeconomic status and its influence or lack of influence in the educational process is discussed in Chapter II. The theoretical framework for the study is laid in Chapter III. Questions to be researched are also presented. The design of the study and procedures utilized in collecting data are presented in Chapter IV; analyses of data are

also presented. Findings are presented in Chapter V; their related implications are discussed in Chapter VI. Comparisons and conclusions are also presented in Chapter VI.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Introduction

When comparing urban schools and students to suburban schools and students, it is evident that similarities are far and in between; in some cases, they are literally nonexistent. The differences far outweigh the similarities. In terms of school-related problems, many urban students must study or attempt to learn in environments that are not conductive to learning. They must also deal with high crime rates within the neighborhoods in which they live (*Student Achievement*, n.d.). Some spend their time away from school hiding or running, trying to avoid being shot directly or by stray bullets.

Leland (2005) found that many students who live in the inner city must deal with various types of problems outside of school which oftentimes adversely affect their achievement in school. The result is low to no motivation, which in turn affects performance, as learning is low on the list of priorities. On the contrary, suburban students are not distracted by such factors; they do not have to worry about the environment in which they study and learn or the environment in which they live. They are fortunate to have it made in this area, as physical facilities are usually second to none. Since they live and attend schools in both a safe and pleasant environment, learning is the top priority.

*Statistics*

In 1996, the public school enrollment in the United States was approximately 38 million. Of this number, 10.4 million students are enrolled in urban schools; 16.4 million were enrolled in suburban schools; and 10.4 million were enrolled in rural schools. (United States Department of Education, 1996). City demographics are reflected in the enrollment in urban schools. Approximately 76% of the students in America's central city schools are African American or Latino. In the school year 1992-93, the large school districts enrolled 5.7 million students, including 36.1% of the nation's African American students; 29.8% Hispanic students; and only 4.8% White students. These districts enrolled 13.5% of the nation's students, but 22.1% of the nation's schools' poor and 35.9% were with limited English proficiency (Anyon, 1997).

Nationally, 42% of urban students are eligible to receive subsidized school lunches, and 40% attend schools defined by the United States Department of Education as high poverty schools, in which more than 40% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. Against these figures, only 10% of suburban students and 25% of rural students attend high poverty schools (United States Department of Education, 1996). Orfield (1993) predicted that if trends continued, the United States would have a majority of minority students in its public schools, enrolling most of the black and Hispanic students in the large cities, with more than half of them living in poverty. The United States Department of Education (2002) reported that half of the nation's sophomores attend suburban schools and 30% attend urban schools. This suggests a higher first-year drop-out rate in urban schools. Nearly half (49 percent) of black students attend urban schools, compared to 21 percent of Whites (United States Department of Education, 2002).

Previous research findings reveal that less than half of the ninth graders entering high school in our large city systems typically graduate in four years (Fossey, 1996 & Glazer, 1993). Findings also indicate that urban dropout rates for low income African-American and Hispanic students are very high and that the dropout rate for this group increased between 1990 and 1993. Recent research, however, reveals that was not and is not the case. Mishel and Roy (as cited in AFT, 2006) acknowledge gaps between graduation rates of the two groups but found that they have been closing over the past four decades. Mishel and Roy (as cited in AFT, 2006) also found that graduation rates of black and Hispanic students have been growing.

Mishel and Roy (as cited in AFT, 2006) note that their findings indicate "a wealth of better data shows high school completion rates are much higher and are contrary to their findings about black and Hispanic students. They note one report that documents the nation's high school graduation rate is 70 percent with a 55% rate for African American students and a 53% rate for Hispanic students. Mishel and Roy (as cited in AFT, 2006) found that the national graduation rate is 82% and that black and Hispanic students graduate at a rate of around 75%.

The contention, according to Mishel and Roy (as cited in AFT, 2006), that there is only a 50-50 chance that black and Hispanic students complete high school is based on the United States Department of Education's data, which is collected from state databases. Most importantly, Mishel and Roy (as cited in AFT, 2006) maintain that these databases are "too unquestioningly accepted even though the results they yield differ substantially from findings based on a wealth of other government data on high school

completion, including the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), considered the best available on this issue" (p. 1).

## Student Achievement

It is a fact that the academic success of students is measured by their performance on standardized tests. Thus, public education, in general, is measured by student performance on such instruments. A close review of the educational system in the United States reveals an achievement gap among the students enrolled in the nation's public schools. This gap is specifically between urban and suburban schools and must be closed.

Research findings indicate that the home environment and school-based factors contribute to or stem from the achievement gap (*Home-Based Factors*, 1996-2007). Less than half of the students enrolled in urban schools score above national achievement norms. The large percentage of students needing special services or programs strain city school budgets and in some cases account for up to one quarter of the expenses (Firestone, Goertz & Natriello, 1994). Old school buildings--many dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries--have not been well maintained. Classrooms typically have few instructional supplies and little equipment (*Education Trust*, 1996; Kozel, 1991).

Oakes (1990) found that students in schools in central cities tend to have less access to science and math resources, programs, and teachers with science or math backgrounds than do those in more advantaged schools. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996) found that students in urban schools have only a 50% percent chance of being taught by a certified mathematics or science teacher. The problem lies in the fact that the achievement gap exists "before students ever cross the school threshold as kindergartners

and this disadvantage can greatly affect their later educational progress and success" (*Home-Based Factors*, 1996-2007, p. 1).

*Socioeconomic Status and Student Achievement*

Levin (2004) found that the socioeconomic status of students is the strongest single predictor of academic achievement. He concludes that "children in inner-city areas, characterized by low SES, face significant obstacles to educational success..." (p. 1). Thus, schools are expected to be miracle workers for closing the achievement gap and reducing poverty.

While some contend that schools must do what is necessary to increase their efforts in ensuring equal opportunities for poor students, others believe that powerful social and economic forces generate and maintain inequality. For this reason, they contend that it is irrational to expect schools to really and truly conquer inequality. When and only when the powerful social and economic forces turn the tide or prove to the public—to the impoverished communities in particular—that they will do all they can to aid in the school improvement efforts, equality for all students would be evident. At this time, those in the aforementioned group would more likely rescind or modify their stance. The good news is that school results vary enormously, "even within similar SES communities, suggesting some schools are managing to produce much better outcomes" (Levin, 2004, p. 2).

One urban school, the school in this study—to be exact—is reaping the benefits of having the powerful social and economic forces on its side. In a recent article, Hubbard (2007) described the school as it has been branded—a "failing" school. It received that label because it has not met the standards set under the No Child Left Behind Act

(NCLB) of 2001. In fact, the school has been on the state's "Needs Improvement" list for five years, which means it has not (for four years) met Average Yearly Performance (AYP), which is the accountability gauge that measures whether a school has met the NCLB benchmarks (Hubbard, 2007).

Many of the students who attend the high school live in federal housing projects. Eighty-one percent are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Of the 944 students, 172 have been retained at least once since kindergarten. Also, of the 273 2006 graduates, only 109 received regular diplomas. The Governor's Office of Student Achievement (as cited in Hubbard, 2007) reports that only 38% of the students are proficient in math.

Hubbard (2007) states: "To break the cycle, at least 81 percent of its students will need to pass an English/Language Arts test, and 46 percent of them must pass math on state exams this spring" (p. 1b). She adds, "If the school doesn't make substantial improvements by 2008, the state can come in, fire the school's staff and take charge—a consequence for schools that fail under federal No Child Left Behind mandates" (p. 1b).

When interviewed, one of the students stated, "I feel like people gave up on this school a long time ago" (Hubbard, 2007). This comment is also echoed by several teachers who transferred from the school. They had actually voiced the same sentiments before leaving. Some felt that if the forceful powers really cared, they would have noticed the high turnover of teachers and the apparent poor leadership of the school. After all, it was sort of understood that schools that fell within the good graces of the powerful sources 'that be' could expect a shift in school administrators if they were considered to be mediocre or below par. However, it just did not happen at the school in this study—at least not until now. Alluding to findings from a restructuring plan which requires teachers

to cite their problems, Hubbard states, "From 2003 to 2006, about one in four teachers quit. Many of them quit after they were placed in ninth-grade classrooms with virtually no support" (p. 2).

All is not lost, however, because the powerful forces (state and local superintendents, school and local police chiefs, local and state newspaper editors, head of the Chamber of Commerce, and university presidents) are attempting to change the minds of the public by stepping up to the plate and providing the support needed. Changing leadership was the most impressive thing the forceful powers did for the failing school. Also impressive was the fact that they publicly noted past problems. Cordy, the county's system director of special programs, (as cited in Hubbard, 2007) stated, "In the past, teachers' lessons didn't match the state curriculum or challenge students to think deeply enough" (p. 3). She added, "The high school wasn't using its resources to support teaching the state curriculum, and it didn't build in student tutorials or safety nets for students needing remedial help" (p. 3). This is a direct indication as to why the students have scored so low on the standardized tests down through the years and why the NCLB mandates have not been met.

Cordy (as cited in Hubbard, 2007) compared the way the federal Title I funds were spent under the old administration with that of the new administration. Instead of allocating most of the money toward buying copiers and computer printers, etc., as was done under the previous administration, most of the funds have been allocated toward "after-school tutorials, transportation, parent activities, training for teachers and instructional supplies" (p. 3). The powerful forces have also come through for the community in general, but mainly for the students and parents of the students enrolled in

the form of allocating funds to build a new school. Barr, the county's school facility design consultant (as cited in Hubbard, 2007), stated, "New schools provide new attitudes and new incentives to get things done. It tells the community the school system cares about them and wants the students to have a good place to learn" (p. 3).

*Effect of Poverty*

Willms (as cited in Levin, 2004) found that socioeconomic status has considerable effects on students' educational skills, and the effects are "stronger in communities with high overall levels of poverty" (p. 2). Thus, remedies for poverty must be found, as a high percentage of students enrolled in America's schools live in poverty. The remedies must include ways of helping the parents of the students enrolled in America's schools to rise above below average socioeconomic status in order to reach the desired results of quality education for all and the assurance that no child is left behind.

In attempting to determine the causes of poverty and some type remedies for poverty, Levin (2004) presents two views. One view is that individuals either will not or cannot do what is necessary to adopt a reasonable life. They tend to be without motivation or initiative. The other view is that some individuals are living at or below poverty level because of circumstances beyond their control. They may not be working enough hours, or they may be working for low wages. Levin (2004) notes that both the general public and the government tend to swing between the two views.

At the 2003 Education Fair hosted by Partners in Hispanic Education, Page, Secretary of Education, (as cited in Taylor, 2005) stated: "Today, many dreams are hampered by an achievement gap between minorities and non-minorities and children of poverty and children of privilege." Taylor (2005) also found that family incomes remain

reliable indicators in predicting various levels of student academic success. Wood (as cited in Taylor, 2005) found that students who are products of middle and high income families achieve at higher levels than students who are products of poverty-stricken families. The latter remain at risk in terms of graduating from high school, being suspended, and expelled from school. It is significant to note that Wood (as cited in Taylor, 2005) found that within the last 25 years, there has been a decline in the dropout rate for students who are economically disadvantaged. However, it remains somewhat higher than for students from higher income families.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (as cited in Taylor, 2005) reported that students from families who fall within the high socioeconomic status range outperform students who fall within the low socioeconomic range in all core (academic) courses on the NEAP tests. The College Board (as cited in Taylor, 2005) also noted that the outcome is the same in terms of student performance on the verbal and math sections of the SAT. The National Center for Educational Statistics and the College Board (as cited in Taylor, 2005) noted that this has consistently been the case.

In 2003, the Department of Education (as cited in Taylor, 2005) found that a huge percentage (71% and 70%) respectively, of Latino and African-American students in the fourth grade qualified for free or reduced-price lunch programs, while only 23% of White students qualified. Thus, students of African-American and Latino descent are disproportionately affected by poverty, which has been found to be directly related to level of academic achievement. Much has not changed, as Reyes and Stanic (1988) found that many students of low socioeconomic status, black students, and female students fall

below achievement level in mathematics. Societal influences, curricula, attitudes of teachers, and attitudes of the students are cited as factors that affected the outcomes.

Willie ( 2001) states:

> Holding socioeconomic status constant, the proportion of black and White students performing above the national norm on the Metropolitan Achievement Test was computed and analyzed for each of these three learning environments. The proportion of students performing above the national norm is higher in affluent-concentrated schools than in poverty-concentrated schools for students in both racial groups. However, the 36 percentage points that separated black and White populations in favor of Whites on the achievement test for all elementary and middle school combined was more or less constant in high, middle, and low socioeconomic schools, suggesting that the test score gap by race is as much a function of the test and its construction as it is a function of characteristics of the test takers. (p. 1)

*Solutions and Strategies in Dealing with Poverty*

Levin (2004) notes that when issues of poverty surface, solutions and strategies are formed by the ideas of the people. It is understood that some people are in the low economic status range because of their own doing and that others fall within the range because of circumstances—none of their own. However, still others fall within the range because of societal or neighborhood ills. Focused on these facts, Levin (2004) discovered that the range of solutions or strategies falls into four groups.

1. Provide for some basic income and other supports (social assistance, minimum wages, tax credits, or a range of other mediums.

2. Issue both positive and negative incentives. Positive incentives include providing for training and education, savings plans, and targeted programs. Negative incentives such as denial of various benefits because of non-employed status may also be issued.
3. Issue economic development, school improvement, and employment initiatives. Also, neighborhood action groups may be formed and supported.
4. Provide tax cuts at the macro-social level.

What schools do directly impact student achievement outcomes. This is particularly the case in schools located in high poverty areas. It is evident that when continuous efforts toward student improvement are made by schools in high poverty areas, they reap positive results. Teddlie and Reynolds (2001) suggested that 10% to 15% of the variation in pupil outcomes is attributable to all the things schools do (or do not do). However, they state, "This does not mean we can necessarily improve outcomes by this amount through changing school practices" (p. 3). Levin (2004) note that their estimate might be close to a maximum on what is possible via school improvements.

On percentage of gains and school improvement, Levin comments on findings from various studies. He states:

> Various studies examined schools that seem to be doing better than expected. These studies typically noted features of these successful schools, such as a common vision, high expectations for students, strong leadership focused on student success, use of data to guide planning, and strong ties with the community. However, schools making the greatest gains are, by definition, untypical. A reading of the literature on various forms of deliberate school

> improvement work indicates gains in student outcomes are quite modest in most schools, even after extensive efforts over several years. Moreover, the improvement process will often be more difficult in schools in challenging circumstances, because such schools face higher staff and pupil turnover, lower levels of overt parent support, and a history of lack of success. (p. 3)

Bracey, 2004 (as cited in Hubbard) found that sustained improvement over time in high-poverty schools is rare, despite claims by studies of exceptional schools. If this is indeed the case, school officials and powerful forces must step up to the plate to do whatever they can to reduce poverty. Bottoms (as cited in Hubbard, 2007) stated, "The first step to turn around a school is to get solid leadership at the top. That, alone, if the person is good, can give a jump in student achievement" (p. 2). The school in this study has made the first step. With the new leader, came new promising initiatives.

*High Stakes Testing—The EOCT*

The government's No Child Left Behind legislation mandates that students must proceed through a battery of tests to demonstrate proficiency in achievement at specific levels (Heller, 2005). To implement this mandate, Georgia's A+ Educational Reform Act of 2000 became law. It mandated that the State Board of Education adopt "end-of-course tests in grades nine through twelve for core subjects to be determined by the State Board of Education" (Georgia Department of education, 2005-2007, p. 1). As a result, it was determined that the End-of-Course Test (EOCT) Assessment program, developed by educators and approved by the State Board of Education, be comprised of eight content area assessments: Mathematics (Algebra I and Geometry); Social Studies (United States History and Economics/Business/Free Enterprise; Science (Biology and Physical

Science); English Language Arts (Ninth Grade Literature and Composition); and American Literature and Composition. The expressed purpose of the adoption was to improve teaching and learning in the state of Georgia. The End-of Course Tests align with the state's curriculum standards and assess specific knowledge and skills. They also provide diagnostic data to assist students in "identifying strengths and areas of need in learning" (p. 1) which results in improved academic performance across the curriculum and prepares the students for other standardized tests. In addition, the test battery provides data to "evaluate the effectiveness of classroom instruction at the school and system levels (Georgia Department of Education, 2005-2007, p. 1).

The End-of-Course Tests are administered during the Winter, Spring and Summer after students complete of one of the listed courses. They may be administered on-line or in the paper-pencil format in the classroom. The paper-pencil assessments can only be taken during the main administrations. Each test is administered in two 60-minute sections. Each school system is at liberty to determine whether or not they will follow the one or two-day administration schedule.

Since the 2004-2005 school year, the EOCT score has been averaged in as 15% of the final course grade. Student must have a final average of 70 or above to pass the course and earn credit toward graduation. According to the Georgia Department of Education (2005-2007):

> When the student repeats a course to earn credit for graduation, he/she would participate in the EOCT at the end of the repeated course. EOCT scores will not be "banked". The EOCT is also one criterion for a student to receive a variance for the Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHSGT). (p. 1)

Dittman (2004) found that students enrolled in urban schools continue to trail behind students enrolled in suburban schools. The student population in urban schools is typically a mixture of predominately black and Hispanic students of low socioeconomic status. On the other hand, the student population in suburban schools is typically predominately White students of middle to high socioeconomic status. Dittman (2004) also found that students enrolled in urban high schools have a tendency to: (a) drop out of school; (b) be assigned to special education; (c) struggle with speaking, reading and writing English; (d) live in single-parent households; and (e) have less access to regular medical care (p. 1). In addition, it is significant to note that Dittman (2004) found that urban schools tend to have fewer financial and educational resources and a shortage of teachers than suburban schools.

Less than half of urban students are above national achievement norms. The large percentage of students needing special services or programs strain city school budgets, in some cases accounting for up to one quarter of the expenses (Firestone, Goertz & Natriello, 1994). The urban high school in this study has been in "needs improvement" status for a number of years, partly due to the lack of funds or misallocation of funds for special services or program. That need has since changed, and with the good grace of Title I funds, special services and programs have been and are still being instituted (Hubbard, 2007).

Old school buildings, many dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries, have not been well maintained. Classrooms typically have few instructional supplies and little equipment (Education Trust, 1996; Kozel, 1991). This was the case of the urban school in this study before the school was awarded Title I funds, or before funds were targeted to

instructional supplies and equipment. The students are still studying in an old dilapidated building that is now said to be incapable of repair, but the good news is that plans are underway to build a new school (Hubbard, 2007).

Oakes found in 1990 that students in schools in central cities tend to have less access to science and math resources, programs, and teachers with science or math backgrounds than do those in more advantaged schools. Darling-Hammond and Sclan (1996) found that students in urban schools have only a 50% percent chance of being taught by a certified mathematics or science teacher. While the urban school in this study has certified math teachers, only 38% of the students are proficient in math (Hubbard, 2007).

Clark (2002) states, "When an appropriately comprehensive range of in-school and out-of-school student and adult behaviors is taken into account, race and class do not strongly correlate with student achievement levels" (p. 1). The strongest correlations to student achievement are revealed in their daily and weekly activities, routines, and lifestyle (p. 1). In summarizing the findings, Clark states:

> The achievement gap between students from different races and social classes largely may be most directly associated with variations in the time-use habits of students (in and out of school), and the involvement of parents, teachers, and adult mentors in students' activities. (p. 1)

Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) found that "the very act of focusing on race influences students' abilities" (p. 1). Research from Stanford University (as cited in Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002) reveals that if students know about the historic poor performance of their group on tests, their own performance might plunge. "This

controversial phenomenon is called the "stereotype threat" (p. 1). Unfortunately, the urban high school in this study has been plagued with the "stereotype threat." In an interview with a student enrolled at the site, Hubbard (2007) noted that the student responded, "I feel like people gave up on this school a long time ago. All they see is SW doing something bad." Parents of the students enrolled at the site and local, state, and national community leaders have continuously seen the school and its students portrayed as bad—in terms of both academics and discipline, as the media keeps it ever before them.

Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) found:

> In the past, when black and White students were told they were being tested on their academic abilities, blacks did worse than Whites. But when a control group was told the tests did not matter and were a laboratory tool, the difference diminished. (p. 1)

Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) state, "Similar findings apply to other racial groups and to gender. When white males were told their performance was being compared with Asian students', the Whites' scores fell" (p. 1). Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) believe that performance outcomes of all groups of students would be better if the threat of comparison is removed.

While disaggregating data to find root causes is good, it can sometimes result in unintended effects, which might generate negative and incorrect information. Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) found this to be the case in dividing test scores by race. They found it might increase the "inequality between more wealthy White schools and less wealthy minority schools." Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) state:

> Because teachers are often told to raise scores for minority or poor students, they set aside the regular curriculum to spend class time teaching to the test. Scores might go up for these students, but the teachers have lost crucial time needed for higher-quality learning. The attention paid to improving the test scores of minority students might actually reduce their overall performance and knowledge over time. And we still see measurable differences between races. (p. 1)
>
> Bainbridge and Lasley (2002) conclude that "race matters, but it does not determine student performance. Professor Amitai Etzioni of George Washington University (as cited in Bainbridge and Lasley, 2002) states, "Race does not determine a person's response (or performance) and often, on all important matters, Americans of different social backgrounds share many convictions, hopes and goods, even in recent years as we see the beginning of the decline of the White majority. Moreover, each racial group is far from homogeneous in itself. Differences within each group abound." (p. 3)

## Student Discipline

Even though there is a decline in adverse student behavior in some areas of discipline throughout the country, when it comes to disciplinary referrals generated by teachers because of inappropriate behavior exhibited in the classroom, school administrators' work in processing the referrals appears to be unending. Thus, student discipline can sometimes prove to be a huge task. Wilkipedia (2007a) reports the following key findings from surveys of students, teachers, and principals, and data collections by federal departments and agencies including the National Center for

Education Statistics (NCES), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

> In 1999–2000, public school principals were asked to report how often certain disciplinary problems occurred at their schools. 29% reported that student bullying occurred on a daily or weekly basis, and 19% reported that student acts of disrespect for teachers occurred at the same frequency). Additionally, 13% reported student verbal abuse of teachers, 3% reported occurrences of student racial tensions, and 3% reported widespread disorder in the classrooms on a daily or weekly basis. (p. 1)

School administrators must not only deal with student-student disciplinary referrals, they must also deal with a number of student-teacher disciplinary referrals. Wilkipedia (2007b) reports:

1. Annually, over the 5-year period from 1998 to 2002, teachers were the victims of approximately 234,000 total nonfatal crimes at school, including 144,000 thefts and 90,000 violent crimes (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault. Over the 5-year period from 1998 to 2002, senior high school and middle/junior high school teachers were more likely than elementary school teachers to be victims of violent crimes (most of which were simple assaults) (30 and 26 crimes, respectively, vs. 12 crimes per 1,000 teachers).
2. Teachers were differently victimized by violent crimes at school according to where they taught. Over the five-year period from 1998 to 2002, urban

teachers were more likely than rural and suburban teachers to be victims of violent crimes.

3. In 2003, 12% of students ages 12–18 reported that someone at school had used hate-related words against them. That is, in the previous six months, someone at school had called them a derogatory word related to race, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, or sexual orientation.
4. Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported being in a fight anywhere declined from 42% to 33% (Indicator 5). Similarly, the percentage of students in grades 9–12 who reported fighting on school property declined over this period, from 16% to 13%. (p. 1)

A number of adolescents drink alcoholic beverages and come to school under the influence. This poses a problem, as upon the smallest encounter or conflict, the students usually exhibit adverse behavior toward their peers or their teacher, which automatically results in a discipline referral. Wilkipedia (2007c) reports:

1. In 2003, 5% of students in grades 9–12 had at least one drink of alcohol on school property in the 30 days prior to the survey, and 45% of students had at least one drink anywhere.
2. In 2003, 22% of students in grades 9–12 reported using marijuana anywhere during the previous 30 days, and 6% reported using marijuana on school property.

3. In 2003, 29% of students in grades 9–12 reported that someone had offered, sold, or given them an illegal drug on school property in the 12 months prior to the survey. (p. 4)

When school administrators discover that a student acted out because of having consumed alcohol or some other substance, they must deal with it immediately and administer the discipline according to the student code of conduct established for that county.

*Socioeconomic Status and Student Discipline*

Down through the years, studies of school suspensions have consistently documented disproportionate numbers by socioeconomic status. Skiba (1997) and Wu, (1982) found that students who receive free school lunch are at increased risk for school suspension. Skiba (1997) and Wu (1982) also found that students whose fathers did not have a full-time job were significantly more likely to be suspended than students whose fathers were employed full-time.

Consistent results on state and national tests have been the norm for the last half century. The fact remains that selected groups of students--"English learners, students of color, and those living in poverty"—repeatedly score far below students in other groups" (*Home-Based Factors,* 1996-2007, p. 1). Wood (as cited in Taylor, 2005) found that students who are products of poverty-stricken families remain at risk in terms of graduating from high school. They also remain at risk of being suspended and expelled from school.

Richter et al. (2006) investigated the effect of socioeconomic status on adolescents' use of alcohol and found:

> Socioeconomic circumstances of the family had only a limited effect on repeated drunkenness in adolescents. For girls only in one out of 28 countries, a significant association between family affluence and repeated drunkenness was observed, while boys from low and/or medium affluent families in nine countries faced a lower risk of drunkenness than boys from more affluent families. Regarding parental occupation, significant differences in episodes of drunkenness were found in nine countries for boys and in six countries for girls. Compared to family affluence, which was positively related to risk of drunkenness, a decreasing occupational status predicted an increasing risk of drunkenness. (p. 1)

Other research examining the relationship between socioeconomic status and substance use in adolescents yielded similar results. Hanson and Chen (2007 found that:

> A total of 113 teenagers reported their substance use, and parents reported family SES. High SES teens were more likely to use substances than low SES teens. Family financial resources were a stronger predictor of substance use than family status. (p. 1).

*Student Perception of School Discipline Policies*

In a qualitative study of student reactions to school discipline, Brantlinger (1991) interviewed adolescents from both high and low income residential areas concerning their reactions to school climate and school discipline. Both low and high income adolescents agreed that low-income students were more likely to be unfairly targeted by school disciplinary sanctions. There also appeared to be differences in the nature of punishment administered to students of different social classes. While high income students more often reported receiving mild and moderate consequences such as teacher reprimands and

seat rearrangements, low income students reported receiving more severe consequences, sometimes delivered in less than professional manners. Examples included being yelled at in front of class, made to stand in the hall all day, and search of personal belongings.

*School Suspensions*

Of particular concern in the administration of school discipline is the overrepresentation of minorities, especially African-American students, in the use of exclusionary and punitive consequences. In one of the earliest explorations of evidence concerning school suspension, the Children's Defense Fund (1975) studied national data on school discipline provided by the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights and reported rates of school suspensions for black students that exceeded white students on a variety of measures. Rates of suspension for black students were between two and three times higher than suspension rates for White students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. While 29 states suspended over 5% of their total black enrollment, only four states suspended 5% or more White students.

*Discipline Policies*

Fork and Spector (2002) conducted a study on juvenile crime and safe school environments and found that zero tolerance discipline policies are excluding children from education rather than ensuring student safety on campus. Children of low socioeconomic status and ethnic minority groups are suspended or expelled in much larger numbers than the rest of the student population in schools with zero tolerance discipline policies. Disciplinary actions under zero tolerance policies increase the risk that a student will drop out of school, which affects the overall dropout rate in grades K-

12. Educational professionals report that zero tolerance policies also interfere with healthy psychological and sociological development of children (Fork & Spector, 2002).

All students may face obstacles as a result of zero tolerance discipline policies in grades K-12. These types of experiences certainly interfere with a student's positive social and educational development. Fork and Spector (2002) contended that zero tolerance discipline policies more often limit students' educational development and consequently affect their personal and social situations in the future. However, alternative operations and disciplinary practices improve behavior and performance of students while maintaining a safe school environment (Fork & Spector, 2002).

## Summary

Across the nation, much emphasis is being placed on disparities in the area of student discipline and the corresponding relationship to student achievement in urban and suburban schools. Some schools—urban schools in particular—simply experience more student discipline problems than suburban schools. This may be attributed to the environment in which many of the students live. Many students enrolled in urban schools must fight to stay alive. Some have never been taught how to positively deal with conflict. Others spend much of their time away from school trying to avoid being shot or killed (*Student Achievement*, n.d.).

A comparison of urban and suburban high schools reveals that urban schools fall short in the area of student achievement while suburban schools toot their horn for maintaining higher student achievement ratings. Forty-two percent of students enrolled in urban schools are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. In the urban school of this study, 81% of the students enrolled are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. Thus,

while suburban students are focusing on their school assignments, many urban students, for the most part, are focusing on what they will have for dinner once they get home.

Because of the crime-infested neighborhoods that a sizeable number of students enrolled in urban schools reside, many sit in class focusing on who they will have to fight once they get off the school bus as they enter their neighborhoods. These types of distractions and the fact that students in urban schools have a 50% chance of being taught by certified teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996) may be the reason less than half of the ninth graders entering urban high schools graduate in four years (Fossey, 1996 & Glazer, 1993).

Student discipline problems adversely affect the quality of instruction, time on task, standardized test scores, and school safety. It is this concern that has prompted school administrators, policymakers, teachers, parents, and community leaders to look more closely at the cause and effect. Thus, school administrators across the nation are researching factors or variables such as academic performance, student perception of school rules, and student discipline to determine if a relationship exists between the variables and socioeconomic status in efforts to address the problems that plaque urban high schools. Research findings indicate that socioeconomic status does indeed have a major impact on student performance or achievement, beginning early on—in kindergarten and progressing into and beyond high school. However, additional research (Bainbridge & Lasley, 2002) implies that the mental state of the students have more of an impact. Thus, when the stereotype threat is removed, students have a tendency to perform better.

# CHAPTER III

# CONCEPTUAL/THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## Introduction

Data collected from the urban and suburban high schools in this study included number of disciplinary referrals and student perception of school board discipline policies. Data were also collected on Georgia's mandated EOCT, of which mathematics, language arts, social studies, American literature, ninth grade literature, and science test scores were examined. In addition, the socioeconomic status of the students enrolled in the two schools was examined. The data were utilized to compare differences and relationships between the two schools to determine the influence of socioeconomic status on behavior and academic achievement.

Figure 1 depicts the direction of the relationships between the dependent variables (student achievement and student discipline) and the independent variables (school location, student SES and student perception of school board discipline policies). See survey instrument administered to the students enrolled in the schools in this study on student perception of school board discipline policies in Appendix E. See Appendices F through J for responses to questions related to grade retention, number of EOCT taken, passed, and failed.

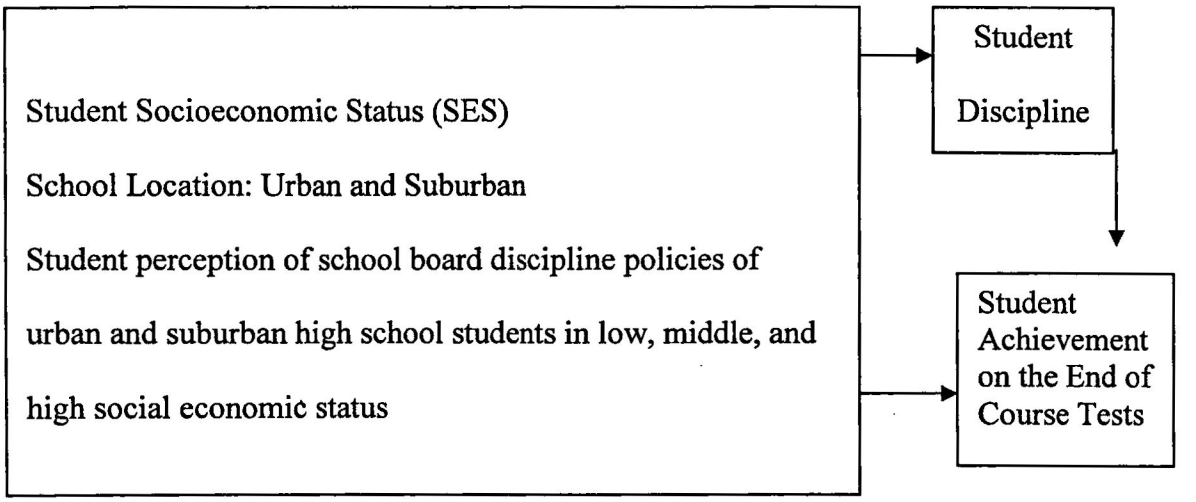


Figure 1

Georgia's EOCT, the instrument of measurement in this study, is a mandate under the A+ Educational Reform Act of 2000. It is the result of a collaborative effort of educators, approved by the State Board of Education. It is a requirement for high school graduation and consists of the following content area assessments that are administered to students in grades 9 through 12 who are enrolled in Georgia schools: (a) Mathematics--Algebra I and Geometry; (b) Social Studies--United States History and Economics/Business/Free Enterprise; (c) Science--Biology and Physical Science; (d) English Language Arts--Ninth Grade Literature and Composition; and (e) American Literature and Composition (Georgia Department of Education, 2005-2007).

According to the Georgia Department of Education (2005-2007), the purpose of the EOCT assessments is to improve teaching and learning. The Department of Education strongly asserts that they are strongly aligned with the established curriculum standards

and contend that the "specific content knowledge and skills are assessed" (p. 1). The Department of Education also contends the following:

> The assessments provide diagnostic information to help students identify strengths and areas of need in learning, therefore improving performance in all high school courses and on other assessments, such as the GHSGT. The EOCT also provide data to evaluate the effectiveness of classroom instruction at the school and system levels. (Georgia Department of Education, p. 1)

Students' overall grade point average is affected by their performance on the EOCT, as the score received on the assessment is averaged in as 15% of their final course grade. According to the Georgia Department of Education (2005-2007), students must earn a final course grade of 70 or above to pass the course.

## Definitions of Variables and Their Relationships

For clarification of selected variables included in this study, the following corresponding definitions have been applied:

*End-of-Course Tests (EOCT)* – State of Georgia criterion-referenced tests which are aligned with the core curriculum for the purpose of measuring student achievement, which is the level of attainment or performance in relation to achievement norms on the state mandated End of Course Tests (Georgia Department of Education, 2004).

*Socioeconomic Status (SES)* – The study of the relationship between economic activity and social life (*Socioeconomics*, 2007). It is measured by an index that includes information describing family structure, parental education and occupation, parental labor market participation, and whether a student's family has specific educational and cultural possessions at home (*Student Achievement in Mathematics*, 2005, p. 7). For purposes of

this study, SES is measured by Free/Reduced Lunch status of the student. Low SES students receive free lunch, Middle SES students pay reduced price, and High SES students pay for lunch.

*Student Discipline* – When punishment is applied by an administrator for inappropriate behavior or acts of misconduct that disrupt the teaching and learning environment. For the purposes of this study, discipline is defined as the penalty a school administrator assigns a student who has been referred for punishment because of failure to abide by the rules of conduct established by school administrators, classroom teachers, or the school system's board of education. It is measured by the number of student disciplinary referrals and types of infractions.

*Student Perception of School Discipline Policies*- How students view the policies and procedures outlined in the county-wide code of conduct manual given to them at the beginning of the school term. Parents are required to sign the form in the back of the manual and have the student return it to his or her teacher. This procedure allows the readers to become knowledgeable of the new polices and emphasizes the necessity of following the school board policies. The vast majority of the students understand and respect the rules. However, a small percentage of the student population does not adhere, projecting a negative view, maintaining no regard for school rules.

*Suburban School* – Situated "outside central cities" (United States Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

*Urban School District* – One in which 75% or more of the households served are in the central city of a metropolitan area (United States Department of Education – National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

## Assumptions Underlying the Variables

It is significant to note that socioeconomic status is believed to be the strongest single predictor of academic achievement (Levin, 2004), as students living in poverty consistently score below students living above poverty level (*Home-Based Factors,* 1996-2007; Taylor, 2005). Other factors are also assumed to influence student achievement. They include school location, student discipline, and student perception of policies related to discipline. Leland (2005) contends that school location has a direct influence on student achievement and Brantlinger (1991) asserts that student perception of student discipline policies is mutual between urban and suburban students. In addition, it is assumed that both groups feel that apparent differences exist in the nature of punishment administered to students of different social classes (Brantlinger, 1991).

The following research questions have been formulated to examine these assumptions:

1. Is there a statistically significant difference in the number of disciplinary referrals on suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to the number of disciplinary referrals on urban high school students of low, middle, high socioeconomic status?
2. Is there a statistically significant difference in student perception of school board discipline policies of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to student perception of school board discipline policies of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status?

3. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the math End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the math EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have also been referred for disciplinary action?
4. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the language arts End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the language arts EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?
5. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the social studies End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the social studies EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?
6. Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the science End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the science EOCT of urban high school students of

low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?

7. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students' discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?
8. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the social studies EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students' discipline referrals and performance on the social studies EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?
9. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the science EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students in comparison to discipline referrals and performance on the science EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?
10. Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the math EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students in comparison to discipline referrals and performance on the math EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?

## Summary

The theoretical framework of this study revolves around published research findings that the academic performance rate of students enrolled in urban high schools is lower than that of students enrolled in suburban high schools (*Home-Based Factors,* 1996-2007; Taylor, 2005). It is expected, then, that suburban high schools will

experience an influx of students for the expressed purpose of improving academic achievement. Research findings also indicate that students in urban high schools are referred for disciplinary action more often than students enrolled in suburban high schools (Brantlinger, 1991). With this at the forefront of their minds, it is expected that more parents of students enrolled in urban schools will transfer or consider transferring their children to suburban schools with the assumption that they will behave better. Further, research findings indicate that students in both urban and suburban high schools feel that students of low socioeconomic status are punished more severely than students of higher socioeconomic status (Brantlinger, 1991). Thus, in order to more fully explore these findings, the author of this study decided to examine the aforementioned factors to determine the extent to which they influence academic achievement.

# CHAPTER IV

# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

This study compared and analyzed data collected on academic achievement and socioeconomic status of students enrolled in urban and suburban schools who have been referred for disciplinary action. Differences in student perception of school board policies on discipline were also analyzed. In addition, analyses of relationships between student discipline and student academic achievement, SES and student achievement, and disciplinary actions and student perceptions of discipline policies were made.

## Design of the Study

An expo facto design was employed in examining the effect of socioeconomic status on behavior (student discipline) and academic performance and student perception of school board discipline policies. The constant was that the participants were from urban and suburban high schools, were either in the low, middle, or high social economic status, and had been referred to school administrators for disciplinary action. The independent variables were: School location—urban and suburban; student SES; perception of school board discipline policies. The dependent variables were student achievement and student discipline. Math, language arts, social studies, American literature, ninth grade literature, and science EOTC scores were used to measure student achievement.

## Description of Setting

The suburban high school at the site of this study is the largest school in the subject county school district in Middle Georgia. It is a public but suburban non-Title I magnet high school with a pre-engineering emphasis. The Georgia Department of Education (2005-2007) reports that during the 2004-2005 school year, the school met AYP. Of the 1,668 students enrolled, 41% were economically disadvantaged. During the 2005-2006 school year, the school's enrollment increased to 1,782, of which 49% were economically disadvantaged. The school did not meet AYP.

The urban high school at the site of this study is located within the city in the subject county school district in Middle Georgia. It is a Title I magnet high school with a law emphasis. It has been in "Needs Improvement" status for four consecutive years. The Georgia Department of Education (2005-2007) reports that during the 2004-2005 school year, the student population was 1,026, of which 76% were economically disadvantaged. During the 2005-2006 school year, the enrollment dropped to 949, of which 81% were economically disadvantaged.

### *School System Demographics*

This study was conducted using two high schools. Tables 3-7 highlight some of the student demographics.

## Descriptive Background Data of Sample Population

Table 3

Description of Student Grade Level

| Grade | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 9 | 27 | 18.4 |
| 10 | 59 | 40.1 |
| 11 | 43 | 29.3 |
| 12 | 18 | 100.0 |

Table 4

Description of Student Gender

| Gender | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 59 | 40.1 |
| Female | 88 | 59.9 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

Table 5

Description of Student Race

| Race | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Black | 113 | 76.9 |
| Hispanic | 1 | .7 |
| Asian | 2 | 1.4 |
| Native | 22 | 15.0 |
| Caucasian | 9 | 6.1 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

Table 6

Description of Student Lunch (SES) Status

| Lunch | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Free | 69 | 46.9 |
| Reduced | 13 | 8.8 |
| Full Price | 65 | 44.2 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

Table 7

Description of Student School Location

| School | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Suburban | 65 | 44.2 |
| Urban | 82 | 55.8 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

## Human Subjects/Consent

The participants for this study were students enrolled in one urban high school and one suburban high school in Middle Georgia. All of the participants were either in the low or middle to high social economic status and enrolled at the site of this study during the 2005-2006 school year. Although system ID numbers were used, names of subjects at both the suburban and the urban high schools remained anonymous to the researcher; thus, obtaining consent was not necessary.

## Sampling Procedures

A random sample from the subject high schools in this study was selected for the purpose of data collection by utilizing the SASI system. The SASI system was also used to identify the students in grades 9 through 12 who had been administered the EOCT in math, language arts, social studies, and science during the 2005-2006. The two subgroups were termed *urban* and *suburban students*.

## Data Collection Procedures

Procedures in the research process were initiated after approval to conduct the research was obtained from Clark Atlanta University. The approval letter, a copy of the

prospectus, and a letter requesting permission to conduct the study were submitted to the Office of Deputy Superintendent requesting permission to collect data from the Department of Research and Accountability. After receiving approval from the deputy superintendent, letters were delivered and e-mailed to principals of the urban and suburban high schools requesting permission to conduct the study at the two sites. Permission was granted by the principals, and a contact person was identified at each school. A phone call was placed to them, and the student surveys were delivered. When completed, the contacts collected the completed surveys and called the researcher to pick them up.

## Description of the Instrumentation

Data on Student SES at the suburban and urban high schools in this study were collected from a review of school records and the SASI system. The following measures were used in this study:

Measure 1. Performance results from the Georgia EOTCs were used in this study. All of the tests measure knowledge and skills outlined in Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum or the newly named *Performance Standards*. The information was used to determine student achievement and the quality of education. All of the tests are grouped into content-related clusters. The number of correct scores (converted into scaled scores) determines the performance indicators for each test. The scores range from 400 to 950 with the standard score being 600. The cut score is 630, which denotes exceeding the standards. Student performance is also determined by a grade conversion which ranges from 0% to 100% (Georgia Department of Education, 2004).

Measure 2. A survey/questionnaire was used to determine perception of school board discipline policies. It was distributed to the participants in this study.

## Statistical Analysis

Data for this study were summarized using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 14. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the participants. The following statistical procedures were used: (a) Pearson correlation, (b) frequency, and (c) multivariate analysis of variance. The 2005-2006 EOCT scores of students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 were utilized as student achievement--the criterion dependent variable.

## Summary

*Reliability*

A Reliability test using SPSS reliability procedure was performed on the instrument used in this study in order to validate the use of the survey instrument. The survey consisted of one component that measures student perception of discipline policy. The response choices were assigned numerical values as follows: (5) All the time; (4) Most times; (3) Not sure; (2) Few times, and (1) Not at all. The results of the reliability indicate that the disciplinary component is reliable and constructed of similar measures.

| | See Table | N= | Cronbach Alpha |
|---|---|---|---|
| Disciplinary Policy | 9 | 147 | .5936 |

# CHAPTER V

# PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of socioeconomic status on student discipline and achievement in urban and suburban high schools. Students from two separate schools, one suburban and the other urban, responded to a survey that asked them their opinion of school discipline policy. The choices on the survey are ranked ordinal scale of numerical values as follows: (5) All the time; (4) Most times; (3) Not sure; (2) Few times, and (1) Not at all.

In order to test the impact of socioeconomic status on student discipline and achievement relationships, a random sample of two high schools of the subject school district was selected and the ninth through twelfth grade students' 2005-06 EOCT scores were utilized as the criterion dependent variable--student achievement. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 14 was used to summarize the data. The following statistical procedures were used: (a) Pearson correlation, (b) frequency, and (c) multivariate analysis of variance. The data are presented in two parts: (1) the statistical distribution of the variables to observe the extent of their variations, and (2) the results and analyses of the statistical tests in response to the identified research questions. All of the statistical procedures were tested at the (0.05) significance level.

## Statistical Distributions of the Variables

The study had a sample size of 147 students from two high schools. One of the high schools was suburban. The other was urban, located within the city.

### *Description of the Sample Population*

The sample population included students from a suburban and an urban high school who received free or reduced lunch and who paid the full price for their lunch. The student sample population in the suburban school that paid for lunch had a higher number of discipline referrals than the sample population in the urban school that paid for their lunch. However, the urban school students who received free lunch had a higher number of discipline referrals than the suburban school students who received free lunch. (See Table 8.)

Table 8

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Number of Discipline Referrals

| LUNCH | SCHOOL | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Free Lunch | Suburban | 6.28 | 4.07 | 18 |
| | Urban | 5.53 | 3.52 | 51 |
| | Total | 5.72 | 3.65 | 69 |
| Reduced | Suburban | 6.14 | 4.48 | 7 |
| | Urban | 8.17 | 3.60 | 6 |
| | Total | 7.08 | 4.07 | 13 |
| Full Price | Suburban | 5.50 | 4.22 | 40 |
| | Urban | 5.76 | 4.34 | 25 |
| | Total | 5.60 | 4.23 | 65 |

It is significant to note that the urban students who received free lunch had a higher perception of the school discipline policy than the suburban students who received free lunch. The suburban students' perception of school discipline policy was greater than the urban school students. Also, the perception of the suburban school students who paid full price for their lunch was greater than that of the urban school students who paid full price for their lunch. (See Table 9.)

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Students' Perceptions of Discipline Policy

| LUNCH | SCHOOL | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Free Lunch | Suburban | 2.30 | .40 | 18 |
| | Urban | 2.41 | .47 | 51 |
| | Total | 2.38 | .45 | 69 |
| Reduced | Suburban | 2.17 | .63 | 7 |
| | Urban | 2.58 | .28 | 6 |
| | Total | 2.36 | .52 | 13 |
| Full Price | Suburban | 2.40 | .49 | 40 |
| | Urban | 2.28 | .66 | 25 |
| | Total | 2.36 | .56 | 65 |

Scale: (5) All the time; (4) Most times; (3) Not sure; (2) Few times, and (1) Not at all

In order to test whether there were any significant differences between disciplinary referrals or student perception of school discipline practices with students of different SES or school location, research questions were generated to present the data in a meaningful order.

## Research Questions

*Research Question 1*: Is there a statistically significant difference in the number of disciplinary referrals on suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to the number of disciplinary referrals on urban high school students of low, middle, high socioeconomic status?

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Table 10. The results indicate that there is no significant difference in the number of disciplinary referrals on suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to the number of disciplinary referrals on urban high school students of low, middle, high socioeconomic status. There is no significant difference between discipline referrals and student SES. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .783$, $p = .459$) since the calculated F value of .783 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.459 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference between number of discipline referrals and school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = .331$, $p = .566$) since the calculated F value of .331 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.566 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in number of student referrals and interaction of student status or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .684$, $p = .506$) since the calculated F value of .684 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.506 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

Table 10

Dependent Variable: Number of Discipline Referrals by School Location and SES

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 45.89 | 5 | 9.17 | 0.57 | .71 |
| Intercept | 3106.64 | 1 | 3106.64 | 195.85 | .00 |
| LUNCH | 24.83 | 2 | 12.41 | 0.78 | .45 |
| SCHOOL | 5.24 | 1 | 5.24 | 0.33 | .56 |
| LUNCH * SCHOOL | 21.71 | 2 | 10.85 | 0.68 | .50 |
| Error | 2236.56 | 141 | 15.86 | | |
| Total | 7209.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 2282.46 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .020 (Adjusted R Squared = -.015)

*Research Question 2*: Is there a statistically significant difference in perception of school board discipline policies of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to perception of school board discipline policies of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status?

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Table 11. There is no statistically significant difference in perception of school board discipline policies of suburban high school students of low,

middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to perception of school board discipline policies of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status. There is no significant difference between discipline policies and student SES. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .020$, $p = .981$) since the calculated F value of .020 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.981 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference between student perception of discipline policies and school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = 1.33$, $p = .250$) since the calculated F value of 1.33 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.250 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in student perception of discipline policies and interaction of student SES or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = 1.697$, $p = .187$) since the calculated F value of 1.698 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.187 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

Table 11

Dependent Variable: Students' Perceptions of Discipline Policy

by School Location and SES

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 0.93 | 5 | 0.18 | 0.71 | .61 |
| Intercept | 446.69 | 1 | 446.69 | 1696.26 | .00 |
| LUNCH | 0.01 | 2 | 0.00 | 0.02 | .98 |
| SCHOOL | 0.35 | 1 | 0.35 | 1.33 | .25 |
| LUNCH * SCHOOL | 0.89 | 2 | 0.44 | 1.69 | .18 |
| Error | 37.13 | 141 | 0.26 | | |
| Total | 865.969 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 38.069 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .025 (Adjusted R Squared = -.010)

*Research Question 3:* Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the math End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the math EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status?

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Tables 12 through 16. There is no significant difference in algebra EOCT scores and school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = .892$, $p = .346$) since the calculated F value of .892 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.346 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. However, there is a significant difference in algebra EOCT scores between students who receive free and reduced lunch and those students who do not receive any lunch subsidy. Students with lower SES have higher algebra EOCT scores than students who pay for their lunch. The data indicates a Scheffe coefficient, $p = 0.031$ with that was significant at less than 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.031). There is no significant difference in algebra EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .783$, $p = .346$) since the calculated F value of .245 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.783 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in geometry EOCT scores and school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = .018$, $p = .895$) since the calculated F value of .018 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.895 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in geometry EOCT scores and student SES. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .103$, $p = .902$) since the calculated F value of .103 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.902 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant

difference. There is no significant difference in geometry EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .886$, $p = .415$) since the calculated F value of .886 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.415 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Algebra EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 587.78 | 32.82 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 567.29 | 71.12 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 560.50 | 51.27 | 40 |
| | Total | 568.78 | 50.07 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 590.94 | 50.67 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 579.83 | 31.79 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 576.84 | 56.36 | 25 |
| | Total | 585.83 | 51.31 | 82 |

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Geometry EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 571.89 | 40.88 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 570.57 | 67.61 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 582.35 | 48.94 | 40 |
| | Total | 578.18 | 48.58 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 586.20 | 58.64 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 573.33 | 40.12 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 570.04 | 55.75 | 25 |
| | Total | 580.33 | 56.58 | 82 |

Table 14

Dependent Variable: Algebra

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 23356.86 | 5 | 4671.37 | 1.82 | .11 |
| Intercept | 26670987.41 | 1 | 26670987.41 | 10419.29 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 2284.40 | 1 | 2284.40 | 0.89 | .34 |
| LUNCH | 12473.00 | 2 | 6236.50 | 2.43 | .09 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 1254.32 | 2 | 627.16 | 0.24 | .78 |
| Error | 360927.55 | 141 | 2559.77 | | |
| Total | 49544353.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 384284.42 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .061 (Adjusted R Squared = .027)

Table 15

Dependent Variable: Geometry

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 6675.74 | 5 | 1335.148 | .46 | .80 |
| Intercept | 26535643.21 | 1 | 26535643.21 | 9264.07 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 50.36 | 1 | 50.36 | .01 | .89 |
| LUNCH | 590.85 | 2 | 295.42 | .10 | .90 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 5076.25 | 2 | 2538.12 | .88 | .41 |
| Error | 403874.92 | 141 | 2864.36 | | |
| Total | 49755847.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 410550.66 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .016 (Adjusted R Squared = -.019)

Table 16

Scheffe: Algebra Scale Score between Student SES

| | | Mean Difference (I-J) | SE | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (I) LUNCH | (J) LUNCH | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 17.04 | 15.29 | .53 |
| | 3 | 23.33 | 8.74 | .03 |
| 2 | 1 | -17.04 | 15.29 | .53 |
| | 3 | 6.29 | 15.37 | .92 |
| 3 | 1 | -23.33 | 8.74 | .03 |
| | 2 | -6.29 | 15.37 | .92 |

Based on observed means.

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

*Research Question 4*: Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the language arts End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the language arts EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Tables 17 through 20. There is no statistically significant

difference in the scores on the American Literature End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the American Literature EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action. There is no significant difference in American literature EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location.

*American literature and school location.* The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = .205$, $p = .815$) since the calculated F value of .205 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.815, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

*American literature and student SES.* The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .728$, $p = .395$) since the calculated F value of .728 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.395 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in Ninth grade Literature EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .912$, $p = .404$) since the calculated F value of .912 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.404, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no statistically significant difference in the scores on the Ninth Grade Literature End of Course Test (EOCT) of students' SES and school location.

*Ninth grade literature and student SES.* The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = .238$, $p = .788$) since the calculated F value of .238 < critical F

value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.788 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

*Ninth Grade literature and school location.* The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = .864$, $p = .354$) since the calculated F value of .864 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.354 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in ninth grade literature EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .370$, $p = .692$) since the calculated F value of .370 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.692, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

Table 17

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: 9th Grade Literature

EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 527.56 | 86.64 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 522.43 | 55.01 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 519.42 | 62.41 | 40 |
| | Total | 522.00 | 68.29 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 525.67 | 94.04 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 562.50 | 90.43 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 531.84 | 78.63 | 25 |
| | Total | 530.24 | 88.81 | 82 |

Table 18

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: American Literature

EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 544.72 | 55.61 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 560.71 | 45.61 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 521.33 | 63.39 | 40 |
| | Total | 532.05 | 60.60 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 525.45 | 94.51 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 521.33 | 100.79 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 534.44 | 85.22 | 25 |
| | Total | 527.89 | 91.17 | 82 |

Table 19

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable: 9th Grade Literature

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 10661.19 | 5 | 2132.23 | 0.32 | .89 |
| Intercept | 22620997.26 | 1 | 22620997.26 | 3432.35 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 5693.09 | 1 | 5693.09 | 0.864 | .35 |
| LUNCH | 3142.92 | 2 | 1571.46 | 0.238 | .78 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 4873.94 | 2 | 2436.97 | 0.370 | .69 |
| Error | 929264.12 | 141 | 6590.52 | | |
| Total | 41703926.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 939925.32 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .011 (Adjusted R Squared = -.024)

Table 20

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable: American Literature

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 15503.18 | 5 | 3100.63 | .48 | .78 |
| Intercept | 22885180.73 | 1 | 22885180.73 | 3611.30 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 4611.28 | 1 | 4611.28 | .72 | .39 |
| LUNCH | 2596.71 | 2 | 1298.35 | .20 | .81 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 11561.60 | 2 | 5780.80 | .91 | .40 |
| Error | 893529.93 | 141 | 6337.09 | | |
| Total | 42158944.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 909033.11 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .017 (Adjusted R Squared = -.018)

*Research Question 5*: Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the social studies End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the social studies EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Tables 21 through 24. There is a statistically significant difference in the scores on the U.S. History End of Course Test (EOCT) of school student SES and school location.

U.*S. History score and student SES.* The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = 8.44$, $p = .004$) since the calculated F value of 8.44 > critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.004, which is less than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is a significant difference. The urban school had higher U.S. History EOCT scores.

*U.S. History score and school location*: The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .501$, $p = .607$) since the calculated F value of .501 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.607 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in social studies EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. There is no statistically significant difference in the scores on the economics End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban or urban schools and students SES and school location.

*Economics EOCT scores and student SES.* The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .236$, $p = .790$) since the calculated F value of .236 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.790, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference between social studies EOCT scores and school location.

*Economics EOCT scores and school location.* The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of (F[1,146] = .005, p = .946) since the calculated F value of .005 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.946, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in social studies EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of (F[2,146] = .955, p = .387) since the calculated F value of .955 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.387, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

Table 21

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: US History

EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 563.78 | 56.56 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 568.14 | 64.26 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 575.82 | 52.12 | 40 |
| | Total | 571.66 | 54.06 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 594.14 | 48.08 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 611.17 | 33.18 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 598.84 | 40.13 | 25 |
| | Total | 596.82 | 44.64 | 82 |

Table 22

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Economics

EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 576.89 | 46.74 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 594.57 | 34.32 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 592.00 | 48.02 | 40 |
| | Total | 588.09 | 46.32 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 594.31 | 43.85 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 576.17 | 67.83 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 590.80 | 54.99 | 25 |
| | Total | 591.91 | 48.88 | 82 |

Table 23

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable: US History

EOCT Scale Score

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 26547.24 | 5 | 5309.45 | 2.17 | .06 |
| Intercept | 27426549.01 | 1 | 27426549.01 | 11211.38 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 20664.65 | 1 | 20664.65 | 8.44 | .00 |
| LUNCH | 2449.03 | 2 | 1224.51 | .50 | .60 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 1185.28 | 2 | 592.64 | .24 | .78 |
| Error | 344929.97 | 141 | 2446.31 | | |
| Total | 50797963.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 371477.224 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .071 (Adjusted R Squared = .039)

Table 24

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable: Economic EOCT Scale Score

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | Df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 5506.28 | 5 | 1101.25 | 0.47 | .79 |
| Intercept | 27627641.71 | 1 | 27627641.71 | 11952.85 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 10.56 | 1 | 10.56 | 0.00 | .94 |
| LUNCH | 1089.30 | 2 | 544.65 | 0.23 | .79 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 4414.00 | 2 | 2207.00 | 0.95 | .38 |
| Error | 325905.30 | 141 | 2311.38 | | |
| Total | 51541059.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 331411.59 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .017 (Adjusted R Squared = -.018)

*Research Question 6*: Is there a statistically significant difference in the scores on the science End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the science EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action?

A multivariate analysis (MANOVA) was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Tables 25 through 28. There is a significant difference in physical science EOCT scores where suburban schools have higher physical science

scores than urban schools. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = 17.165$, $p = .000$) since the calculated F value of 17.165 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.000 which is less than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is a significant difference. There is no significant difference between physical science EOCT scores and student SES. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .596$, $p = .552$) since the calculated F value of .596 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.552, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in science EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = 2.818$, $p = .063$) since the calculated F value of 2.88 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.063, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

There is no significant difference in biology EOCT scores of suburban schools and urban schools. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[1,146] = .453$, $p = .502$) since the calculated F value of .453 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.502, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference between biology EOCT scores and student SES. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .092$ $p = .912$) since the calculated F value of .092 < critical F value of 3.318 and having a probability of 0.912 which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference. There is no significant difference in biology EOCT scores between interaction of student SES or school

location. The data analysis yielded a calculated F value of ($F[2,146] = .224$, $p = .800$) since the calculated F value of .224 < critical F value of 4.034 and having a probability of 0.800, which is greater than the significance acceptance level of 0.05; thus, there is no significant difference.

Table 25

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Biology

EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 510.78 | 93.69 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 486.71 | 80.17 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 507.57 | 70.80 | 40 |
| | Total | 506.22 | 77.70 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 490.06 | 76.27 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 495.17 | 71.24 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 484.96 | 77.15 | 25 |
| | Total | 488.88 | 75.34 | 82 |

Table 26

Descriptive Statistics Dependent Variable: Physical Science

EOCT Scale Score

| SCHOOL | LUNCH | Mean | SD | N |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Suburban | Free | 565.00 | 50.52 | 18 |
| | Reduced | 533.29 | 68.27 | 7 |
| | Full Price | 522.00 | 76.95 | 40 |
| | Total | 535.12 | 71.29 | 65 |
| Urban | Free | 441.76 | 84.77 | 51 |
| | Reduced | 496.00 | 108.49 | 6 |
| | Full Price | 461.16 | 85.29 | 25 |
| | Total | 451.65 | 86.91 | 82 |

Table 27

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable: Biology

EOCT Scale Score

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 14701.53 | 5 | 2940.30 | .49 | .78 |
| Intercept | 19685077.97 | 1 | 19685077.97 | 3294.74 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 2705.71 | 1 | 2705.71 | .45 | .50 |
| LUNCH | 1102.53 | 2 | 551.26 | .09 | .91 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 2671.91 | 2 | 1335.95 | .22 | .80 |
| Error | 842430.93 | 141 | 5974.68 | | |
| Total | 37100888.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 857132.46 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .017 (Adjusted R Squared = -.018)

Table 28

Analysis of Variance Dependent Variable: Physical Science

EOCT Scale Score

| Source | Type III Sum of Squares | df | MS | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corrected Model | 294688.29 | 5 | 58937.65 | 9.28 | .00 |
| Intercept | 20271049.28 | 1 | 20271049.28 | 3193.13 | .00 |
| SCHOOL | 108966.17 | 1 | 108966.17 | 17.16 | .00 |
| LUNCH | 7568.85 | 2 | 3784.42 | 0.59 | .55 |
| SCHOOL * LUNCH | 35776.34 | 2 | 17888.17 | 2.81 | .06 |
| Error | 895113.96 | 141 | 6348.32 | | |
| Total | 36277048.00 | 147 | | | |
| Corrected Total | 1189802.25 | 146 | | | |

a R Squared = .248 (Adjusted R Squared = .221)

Table 29

Pearson Correlation of Research Variables

| | Lunch SES | School Location | Discipline Policy | # of Discipline Referrals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lunch SES | --- | -.341* | .064 | -.014 |
| School Location | -.341* | --- | .009 | .001 |
| 9th Grade Literature | -.011 | .051 | .024 | .011 |
| American Literature | -.024 | -.026 | -.046 | .022 |
| Biology | .021 | -.113 | .159 | -.079 |
| Physical. Science | .132 | -.461* | -.055 | .013 |
| Algebra | -.218* | .166* | -.034 | .051 |
| Geometry | -.044 | .020 | .081 | .061 |
| US History | -.014 | .249* | .058 | .019 |
| Economics | .018 | .040 | -.032 | -.040 |

N=147; * $p < .05$ significance level

*Research Question 7:* Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students and performance on the language arts EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?

The following achievement test scores were used as separate variables to measure language arts: American literature and ninth grade literature. A Pearson Correlation was

conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Table 29. There is no statistically significant relationship in the number of discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT scores of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students in comparison to the number of discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students. There is no significant relationship between American Literature EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.022$, $p = 0.788$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.788); thus, there is no relationship.

There is no significant relationship between American Literature EOCT scores and student SES. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.024$, $p = .769$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.769); thus there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between American literature EOCT scores and school location. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.026$, $p = .752$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.752); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between Ninth Grade Literature EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.011$, $p = .893$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.893); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between language arts EOCT scores and student SES. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.011$, $p = .893$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability

0.05 (the calculated value being 0.893); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between ninth grade literature EOCT scores and school location. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.051$, $p = .538$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.538); thus, there is no relationship.

*Research Question 8*: Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the social studies EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students' discipline referrals and performance on the social studies EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?

The following achievement test scores were used as separate variables to measure social studies. A Pearson Correlation was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Table 29. There is a significant relationship between school location and U.S. History EOCT scores. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.249$, $p = 0.002$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.002); thus, there is no relationship. Urban schools have higher U.S. History EOCT scores than suburban schools. There is no significant relationship between U.S. History EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.019$, $p = 0.821$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.821); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between U.S. History EOCT scores and student lunch SES. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.014$, $p = 0.862$ where the calculated probability is greater than

accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.862); thus, there is no relationship.

There is no significant relationship between school location and economics EOCT scores. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.040$, $p = 0.631$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.631); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between economic EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.040$, $p = 0.633$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.633); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between economic EOCT scores and student lunch SES. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.018$, $p = 0.833$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.833); thus, there is no relationship.

*Research Question 9*: Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the science EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students in comparison to discipline referrals and performance on the science EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?

The following achievement test scores were used as separate variables to measure science: Biology and physical science. A Pearson Correlation was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Table 29. There is a significant relationship between school location and physical science EOCT scores. Suburban schools have higher physical science EOCT scores than urban schools. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -.461$, $p = 0.000$ where the calculated probability is less

than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being -0.461); thus, there is no relationship. There is no relationship between physical science EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.013$, $p = 0.873$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.873); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between physical science scores and student lunch SES. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.132$, $p = 0.112$ were the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.112); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between school location and biology EOCT scores. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.113$, $p = 0.174$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.174); thus, there is no relationship. There is no relationship between biology EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.079$, $p = 0.339$ were the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.339); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between biology EOCT scores and student lunch SES. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.021$, $p = 0.800$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.800); thus, there is no relationship.

*Research Question 10*: Is there a statistically significant relationship in discipline referrals and performance on the math EOCT of suburban lower, middle, and upper

SES students in comparison to discipline referrals and performance on the math EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students?

The following achievement test scores were used as separate variables to measure math: geometry and algebra. A Pearson correlation was conducted to analyze the data. The results are displayed in Table 19. There is a significant relationship between student SES (school lunch) and algebra EOCT scores. Students with lower SES have higher algebra EOCT scores. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.218$, $p = 0.008$ where the calculated probability is less than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.008); thus, there is a relationship. There is no significant relationship between algebra EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.051$, $p = 0.536$ where the calculated probability is greater than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.536); thus, there is no relationship. There is a significant relationship between algebra EOCT scores and school location. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.166$, $p = 0.045$ where the calculated probability is less than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.045); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship with geometry EOCT score and students SES (school lunch). The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = -0.044$, $p = 0.595$ where the calculated probability is less than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.595); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between geometry EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.061$ $p = 0.460$ where the calculated probability is less than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being

0.460); thus, there is no relationship. There is no significant relationship between geometry EOCT scores and school location. The data analysis yielded a Pearson correlation of $r(147) = 0.020$, $p = 0.809$ where the calculated probability is less than accepted probability 0.05 (the calculated value being 0.809); thus, there is no relationship.

## Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of socioeconomic status on student discipline and achievement in urban and suburban high schools of a metropolitan city school district. The researcher found that there is no relationship between disciplinary referrals, student perceptions of discipline policy, and socioeconomic status or school location. However, there were relations with socioeconomic status and algebra EOCT scores. There were relationships with school location and algebra EOCT scores, physical science EOCT scores, and U.S. History EOCT scores.

*Research Question 1 Findings*: The results indicate that there is no significant difference in the number of disciplinary referrals on suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to the number of disciplinary referrals on urban high school students of low, middle, or high socioeconomic status. There is no significant difference between discipline referrals and student SES. There is no significant difference between number of discipline referrals and school location. There is no significant difference in number of student referrals and interaction of student SES or school location.

*Research Question 2 Findings*: There is no statistical significant difference in perception of school board discipline policies of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status in comparison to perception of school board discipline policies of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status. There is no significant difference between discipline policies and student SES. There is no significant difference between number of discipline policies and school location. There is no significant difference in number of student perception of discipline policies between the interaction of the students SES, or school location.

*Research Question 3 Findings*: There is no significant difference in algebra EOCT and school location. However, there is a significant difference in algebra EOCT scores of students who receive free and reduced lunch and those students who do not receive any lunch subsidy. Students with lower SES have higher algebra EOCT scores than students who pay for their lunch. There is no significant difference in algebra EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. There is no significant difference in geometry EOCT scores and school location. There is no significant difference in geometry EOCT scores and student SES. There is no significant difference in geometry EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location.

*Research Question 4 Findings:* There is no statistically significant difference in the scores on the American Literature End of Course Test (EOCT) of suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action in comparison to the scores on the American Literature EOCT of urban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action. There is no significant difference in American

Literature EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. There is no significant difference in ninth grade literature EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. There is no statistically significant difference in the scores on the ninth grade literature EOCT of student SES and school location. There is no significant difference in ninth grade literature EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location.

*Research Question 5 Findings*: There is a statistically significant difference in the scores on the U.S. History EOCT of student SES and school location. The urban school had a higher U.S. History EOCT scores. There is no significant difference in social studies EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. There is no statistically significant difference in the scores on the economics EOCT of suburban or urban schools and student SES and school location. There is no significant difference between social studies EOCT scores and school location. There is no significant difference in social studies EOCT scores and the interaction of student SES or school location.

*Research Question 6 Findings:* There is a significant difference in physical science EOCT scores. Suburban schools have higher physical science scores than urban schools. There is no significant difference between physical science EOCT scores and student SES. There is no significant difference in science EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location. There is no significant difference in biology EOCT scores of suburban schools and urban schools. There is no significant difference between biology EOCT scores and student SES. There is no significant difference in biology EOCT scores and interaction of student SES or school location.

*Research Question 7 Findings:* There is no statistically significant relationship in the number of discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT scores of suburban lower, middle, and upper SES students' discipline referrals and performance on the language arts EOCT of urban lower, middle, and upper SES students. There is no significant relationship between American literature EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is no significant relationship between American literature EOCT scores and student SES. There is no significant relationship between American literature EOCT scores and school location. There is no significant relationship between ninth grade literature EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is no significant relationship between language arts EOCT scores and student SES. There is no significant relationship between ninth grade literature EOCT scores and school location.

*Research Question 8 Findings*: There is a significant relationship between school location and U.S. History EOCT scores. Urban schools have higher U.S. History EOCT scores than suburban schools. There is no significant relationship between U.S. History EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is no significant relationship between U.S. History EOCT scores and student lunch SES.

There is no significant relationship between school location and economics EOCT scores. There is no significant relationship between economic EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is no significant relationship between economic EOCT scores and student lunch SES.

*Research Question 9 Findings*: There is a significant relationship between school location and physical science EOCT scores. Suburban schools have higher physical

science EOCT scores than urban schools. There is no relationship between physical science EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is no significant relationship between physical science scores and student lunch SES. There is no significant relationship between school location and biology EOCT scores. There is no relationship between biology EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is no significant relationship between biology EOCT scores and student lunch SES.

*Research Question 10 Findings*: There is a significant relationship between student SES (school lunch) and algebra EOCT scores. Students with lower SES have higher algebra EOCT scores. There is no significant relationship between algebra EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is a significant relationship between algebra EOCT scores and school location. There is no significant relationship with geometry EOCT score and student SES (school lunch). There is no significant relationship between geometry EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals. There is no significant relationship between geometry EOCT scores and school location.

# CHAPTER VI

# DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

## Introduction

A review of literature indicates students enrolled in suburban high schools perform better and are generally more disciplined than students enrolled in urban high schools. It also reveals that students of low SES perform below those of high SES. Both the National Center for Educational Statistics and the College Board (as cited in Taylor, 2005) found this to be true in all core courses on the NEAP and on the verbal and math sections of the SAT. In fact, the National Center for Educational Statistics and the College Board (as cited in Taylor, 2005) discovered that this has been a consistent finding. This study, however, does not fully support the literature on the aforementioned factors in terms of differences between suburban and urban schools. Significant and specific findings and related implications and recommendations are presented below.

## Significant Findings

It is significant to note that contrary to existing research findings, there was no significant difference in the number of discipline referrals and school location, regardless of SES. There was also no significant difference between the number of disciplinary referrals and student performance on any of the End of Course Tests administered to the urban and suburban high school students (RQ3). Specifically, there was no significant difference in algebra and geometry EOCT scores and school location of students who had been referred for disciplinary action. There was, however, a statistically significant

difference in student SES and Algebra EOCT scores. Students referred for disciplinary action who received free or reduced lunch had higher Algebra EOCT scores than students who had been referred for disciplinary action who paid for their lunch. This significant difference is possibly due to the highly qualified urban school math teachers that have more than 38 years of experience.

Another significant finding revealed a statistically significant difference in the U. S. History EOCT scores of urban and suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who had been referred for disciplinary action (RQ5). The urban students scored higher. No statistically significant differences, however, were revealed in the Social Studies EOCT scores.

One reason for the significant findings in this study may be because of teacher competencies (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996). It should be noted that knowledgeable teachers (regardless of school location) produce knowledgeable students, and knowledgeable students produce desired results. Another reason may lie in the specific limitations of this study. It was conducted in only one school district, making the school profiles and characteristics unique to the sites studied. The EOCT is a state-mandated test; however, a variety of testing instruments are used across the nation to assess student achievement. Thus, this study was limited to individual performance results in math, language arts, social studies, and science on the EOTC and was the only data used to determine student achievement. Further, the population was limited to students enrolled in regular education courses at the two sites of this study; students enrolled in special education classes were not included.

## Specific Findings

RQ1: No significant differences exist in the number of discipline referrals and school location of high school students of low, middle, and high SES.

RQ2: No statistically significant differences exist in perception of school board discipline policies of urban and suburban students of low, middle, and high SES.

RQ3: There is no significant difference in algebra and geometry EOCT scores and school location of students who have been referred for disciplinary action. There is, however, a statistically significant difference in student SES and Algebra EOCT scores. Students referred for disciplinary action who receive free or reduced lunch have higher Algebra EOCT scores than students who have been referred for disciplinary action who pay for their lunch.

RQ4: No statistically significant differences exist in American Literature and Ninth Grade Literature EOCT scores of urban and suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action.

RQ5: A statistically significant difference exists in the U. S. History EOCT scores of urban and suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action. The urban students scored higher. No statistically significant differences, however, exist in the Social Studies EOCT scores.

RQ6: A significant difference exists in Physical Science EOCT scores of urban and suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action. The suburban students scored higher than the urban students. No significant differences exist in Science and Biology EOCT scores of

urban and suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status who have been referred for disciplinary action.

RQ7: No statistically significant relationship exists in the number of disciplinary referrals and performance on the Language Arts and American Literature EOCT of urban and suburban high school students of low, middle, and high socioeconomic status.

RQ8: No significant relationship exists between U.S. History EOCT scores and number of discipline referrals of urban and suburban high school students. There is also no significant relationship between U.S. History EOCT scores and SES.

RQ9: No significant relationship exists between Physical Science EOCT scores and Biology EOCT scores of urban and suburban students of low, middle and high SES.

RQ 10: No significant relationship exists between Algebra EOCT and Geometry EOCT scores and the number of discipline referrals of urban and suburban students of low, middle, and high SES.

## Implications

The following implications can be made based on the findings in this study.

1. SES is about level of income--not about behavior. Students choose to behave appropriately or inappropriately wherever they attend school.
2. Students are observant. They recognize unfair treatment wherever it exists.
3. Students, regardless of socioeconomic level, can learn (wherever they attend school), even if they must be disciplined—if the teacher believes it.
4. When students are not physically hungry and are taught by highly qualified, understanding, and compassionate teachers who enforce school discipline policies, they can succeed.

5. Educators in low performing schools are focusing more on the teaching-learning process. They are developing, revising, and implementing various teaching strategies and enforcing discipline to ensure that no student is left behind.
6. A large majority of urban students do not appear to be interested in physical science and only take what is required in the science curriculum to graduate. Thus, they are not knowledgeable in the necessary foundational principles, causing them to be deficient not because of a lack of ability, but because of a lack of preparation and instruction.
7. While the state mandated EOCT assessments are crucial in school improvement efforts, they are not very significant in determining mastery because they constitute a small percentage (15%) of the final grade.
8. School administrators are not professionally trained in aligning the curriculum with the standards measured on the EOCT exams. Thus, they are not in a position to assist classroom teachers with related instructional strategies.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings and implications of this study, more emphasis should be placed on policies established by school system administrators to ensure improved student achievement. Also, common practices throughout each school district should be in place to ensure county and state-wide student improvement. Thus, further research is needed to aid school administrators in this effort.

*Policy*

It is recommended that school system administrators lead in establishing policies that ensure that all certified personnel in urban, rural, and suburban schools across the country are trained in the area of student achievement. It is also recommended that school system administrators participate in training sessions on a variety of topics, especially those that are centered around school improvement. The following topics are recommended:

1. "Understanding Poverty"
2. "Best Practices in Classroom Management"
3. "The Relationship between Teacher Attitudes and Student Achievement"
4. "Multiple Intelligences"
5. "Critical Thinking"

Such training would enable school system administrators to not only better understand what school building administrators and certified staff face; it would help them to understand what is needed to reach the desired results. It is further recommended that school system administrators create policy that requires school building administrators to receive training on curriculum alignment with state and federal mandated exams and their corresponding standards so that they would be able to recommend appropriate instructional strategies when necessary.

Additional recommended policies include:

1. Development of a model discipline plan for examining covert and overt behavioral problems that hamper academic achievement.

2. Student support services created to aid teachers and school building administrators in dealing with difficult students.
3. A close review of the percentage afforded state-mandated exams and the establishment of a county and state-wide policy to ensure consistency.

*Practice*

It is recommended that school administrators do what is necessary to ensure that every student has what he or she needs to succeed--nourishment, a safe environment, and a highly qualified teacher—in particular. It is also recommended that the findings in this study be used to enhance the discipline by providing school administrators with information that will aid them in analyzing and comparing data collected on student performance, socioeconomic levels, and discipline in various schools. It would help them to understand that unless students attend school where they live, data obtained can only be generalized, as it is not totally about where the school is located; it is about the makeup of the student population.

Other recommended practices include:

1. Giving incentives to teachers who possess and exemplify the qualities and skills needed to help all students succeed and are placed in low achieving schools.
2. Counselors encouraging students in all schools—(especially low performing schools) to take more science-related courses to prepare them for classes such as Physical Science.
3. Using collected data in efforts to improve academic performance.

*Further Research*

It is recommended that further study be conducted in more than one school district. It should revolve around several areas on the topic of student improvement. The emphasis should be placed on: (a) the use of a variety of test instruments, (b) collected data on the number of highly qualified teachers assigned to low performing urban schools, (c) best practices of low performing schools that have moved from the bottom to the top in academics, and (d) best practices in student discipline. It is also recommended that researchers conduct similar studies that will examine all mandated standardized tests to ensure that they measure the skills needed to survive and compete in our global economy. In addition, it is recommended that further research be conducted on:

1. the success rate of students who live at or below poverty level.
2. student discipline at all levels—Pre-K to 12$^{th}$ grade—and its effect on student achievement.
3. best practices in analyzing student achievement.
4. variables such as genders, race, and high school test scores.

## Summary

A number of students enrolled at the suburban school in this study are transported by bus to the school. They do not live in the neighborhood of the school they attend; they actually reside in the inner city. This may imply that the suburban school in this study may only be suburban in name only and may not fit the mold of a suburban school because of its population mix of inner city and suburban students.

Students who reside in the inner city and are transported to suburban schools bring inner city (neighborhood) problems and concerns to school. These problems and

concerns are likely to affect adversely their mindset and may result in below average academic performance and disciplinary problems. Research by Bainbridge & Lasley (2002) support this idea, as they found that the mental state of the students has a huge impact on performance. Therefore, grades and perception of school discipline policies of students who are transported from the inner city to suburban schools may reflect those of students enrolled in inner city schools. This implies that the number of disciplinary referrals may be similar in both urban and suburban schools and may explain the findings that no significant differences exist between disciplinary referrals and scores, disciplinary referrals and SES, and disciplinary referrals and school location.

In this study, SES was based on whether or not the students paid for their lunch. Students who received free and reduced lunch were considered to be of low economic status, and students who paid for their lunch were considered to be of middle to high economic status. Because the students of low economic status exceeded the students of middle to high economic status in scoring on the Algebra EOCT, it may be concluded that well-nourished students of low economic status taught by highly qualified and knowledgeable teachers are not only capable of learning; they are capable of excelling.

The findings in this study would help school administrators to understand that if students of low economic status are not permitted to eat free or reduced lunch, some students (especially those enrolled in algebra classes) may be left behind, and their schools may end up on not only the state's "Needs Improvement" list, but on the national "Needs Improvement" list as well.

Appendix A

Letter of Consent to District Superintendent to Conduct Study

February 20, 2007

Deputy Superintendent
Board of Education

Dear Deputy Superintendent:

I am currently a doctoral student at Clark Atlanta University. My dissertation topic is *Student Discipline in Suburban and Urban High Schools: The Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Behavior and Academic Performance.*

I request permission to access data related to socioeconomic status, academic performance, and discipline referrals of students enrolled in one inner-city high school and one suburban high school. I also request permission to conduct a student survey on perception of school discipline policies in the selected schools. The results of the information for this study will be treated confidentially, and all raw data will be secured by the researcher. Findings will be reported as aggregated summary data, and no identifiable information will be presented.

Thank you for consideration of my requests.

Sincerely,

Jeffery J. Ashley
Doctoral Student

Permission granted by:

_____
Deputy Superintendent
Administration

Appendix B

Letter of Consent to Principals of Suburban and Urban High Schools to Conduct Study

February 20, 2007

Principal

Dear Principal:

I am currently a doctoral student at Clark Atlanta University. My dissertation topic is *Student Discipline in Suburban and Urban High Schools: The Effect of Socioeconomic Status on Behavior and Academic Performance.* Your school was selected because of the demographics and a good mix of the listed variables.

I request permission to access data related to socioeconomic status, academic performance, and discipline referrals of students enrolled in your high school. I also request permission to conduct a student survey on perception of school discipline policies. The results of the information for this study will be treated confidentially, and all raw data will be secured by the researcher. Findings will be reported as aggregated summary data, and no identifiable information will be presented.

Thank you for consideration of my requests.

Sincerely,

Jeffery J. Ashley
Doctoral Student

Permission granted by:

_____
Principal

# Appendix C

## Letter of Consent to Parents for Student to Complete Survey

Dear Parent:

I am an administrator in the local school system and a doctoral student at Clark Atlanta University. Presently, I am working on my dissertation, which focuses on socioeconomic status and student behavior. One aspect of the study involves perceptions students have about school policies regarding discipline, which will be gathered via a survey. The study focuses on students enrolled in an urban and a suburban school in the county; thus, permission to allow your child to participate in the survey is requested.

The time required to complete the survey is approximately ten minutes. There is no penalty should your child decide not to respond. All students who agree to participate will be asked to complete the survey within one week of the date they receive it and to place it in a self-addressed stamped envelope that will be enclosed for their convenience.

Names will not be on the surveys, and completion and return of the survey will be considered permission to use the responses in the study. If your child participates, please be assured that his or her responses will be completely confidential. All of the surveys and return envelopes are identical except that school codes are included on the top right-hand side of the survey to record response rate. While none of the questions solicit sensitive information, your child may refuse to answer any of the items. Returned surveys will be kept by the researcher under lock and key and destroyed after the study is completed. The results of the survey will be provided upon request.

Please indicate below whether or not your child will be participating and have your child return it to me. If you have any questions about this research project, please call me at (478) 751-6787 or contact me via e-mail address jashley.ne@bibb.k12.ga.

Sincerely,

Jeffery Ashley

_____Yes, my child_____ may complete the survey.

_____No. my child _____ may not complete the survey.

_____ _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian Date

# Appendix D

## Letter of Commitment to Complete Student Survey

Dear Student:

I am working on an advanced degree which focuses on socioeconomic status and student behavior. I will be studying how you feel about school guidelines and policies regarding discipline. The study focuses on students enrolled in an urban and a suburban school in the county. Therefore, I am asking that you please complete a survey about school discipline policies.

The time required to complete the survey is approximately ten minutes. There is no penalty should you decide not to respond. You will have one week after you receive it to place it in a self-addressed stamped envelope that will be enclosed for their convenience.

Names will not be on the surveys, and completion and return of the survey will be considered permission to use the responses in the study. Please be assured that your responses will be completely confidential. All of the surveys and return envelopes are identical except that school codes are included on the top right-hand side of the survey to record response rate. While none of the questions solicit sensitive information, you may refuse to answer any of the items. Returned surveys will be kept by the researcher under lock and key and destroyed after the study is completed. The results of the survey will be provided upon request.

Please indicate below if you plan to complete the survey. If you have any questions about this research project, please call me at (478) 751-6787 or contact me via e-mail address jashley.ne@bibb.k12.ga.

Sincerely,

Jeffery Ashley

_____Yes, I plan to complete the survey.

_____No. I do not plan to complete the survey.

Appendix E
Survey of High School Students
on Student Discipline

Confidential
Identification Number _____

*I. Personal Demographics*

1. Gender
   male____ female____

2. Your ethnicity is
   (a) black___ (b) Hispanic___ (c) Asian___
   (d) Native American___ (e) Caucasian___ (f) other_____

Please check only one response for question number 3.

3. Do you receive a free lunch? _____
   Do you receive a reduced price lunch? _____
   Do you pay for lunch? _____

4. Your grade level is
   (a) 9th _____ (b) 10th_____ (c) 11th_____ (d) 12th___

5. Have you ever repeated a grade?
   Yes___ No___

6. If you answered "Yes" to Question No. 4 and were retained in high school, in which grade were you retained?
   (a) 9th _____ (b) 10th_____ (c) 11th_____ (d) 12th

7. How many End of Course Tests were you administered last semester?
   1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__ 6__ 7__ 8__

8. Did you pass **all** of the End of Course Tests administered to you last semester?
   Yes___ No___

9. How many End of Course Tests did you fail last semester?
   0__ 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__ 6__ 7__ 8

*II. How do you rate the following questions or statements?*

1 - No, not at all
2 - Yes, a few times
3 - Yes, most times
4 - Yes, all the time
5 – Not sure

| | | No, not at all | Yes, a few times | Yes, most times | Yes, all the time | Not Sure |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | Do you feel as though students who are good in their class work (A or B students) get by with misconduct when they should be sent to the office? | | | | | |
| 11. get | Do you feel that students who are not so good in their class work sent to the office for doing any "little" thing or for "mildly" acting out? | | | | | |
| 12. | Do you feel that students who are economically disadvantaged receive greater punishments from school administrators when they are sent to the office than students who are not economically disadvantaged? | | | | | |
| 13. | Do you feel that students who receive free or reduced lunch are treated differently by teachers? | | | | | |
| 14. who the | Do you feel that students who receive free or reduced lunch and are sent to the office for misbehavior are treated differently by school administrators in terms of punishment when compared to students who do not receive free or reduced lunch and are sent to office for misconduct? | | | | | |
| 15. | Do you feel that punishments or consequences for misconduct assigned by school administrators to students who receive free or reduced lunch are not the same for students who are sent to the office for the same reason? | | | | | |
| 16. | Do you feel that school administrators make a conscious effort to resolve student discipline problems? | | | | | |
| 17. | Do you feel that school administrators target certain students or "keep watch over certain students so they can suspend them or get them "kicked out" of school? | | | | | |
| 18. | Do you feel that school administrators have gained the respect of | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| the | students? | | | | | |
| 19. | Do you feel that school administrators attempt to provide assistance to students with special problems? | | | | | |
| 20. | Do you feel that teachers and administrators thoroughly explain the school and county rules so that every student understands them? | | | | | |
| 21. | Did your parent(s) or guardian(s) discuss the rules outlined in the Student Code Handbook with you at the beginning of the school | | | | | |
| year | before signing it? | | | | | |
| 22. | Do you feel that the school administrator(s) will follow the guidelines outlined in the Student Code Handbook when assigning punishment to you if you were sent to the office for misconduct? | | | | | |
| 23. | Do you trust your school administrators? | | | | | |

## Appendix F

Description of Responses on Grade Retention Survey Question 5

| Repeated | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 29 | 19.7 |
| No | 117 | 79.6 |
| Missing | 1 | .7 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

## Appendix G

Description of Responses on Grade Retention Survey Question 6

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 9th | 16 | 10.9 |
| 10th | 8 | 5.4 |
| 11th | 6 | 4.1 |
| 12th | 3 | 2.0 |
| NA | 114 | 77.6 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

## Appendix H

### Description of Responses on Survey Question 7

How many End of Course Tests were you administered last semester?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 49 | 33.3 |
| 2 | 49 | 33.3 |
| 3 | 20 | 13.6 |
| 4 | 24 | 16.3 |
| 5 | 3 | 2.0 |
| 6 | 2 | 1.4 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

## Appendix I

### Description of Responses on Survey Question 8

Did you pass **all** of the End of Course Tests administered to you last semester?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 91 | 61.9 |
| No | 56 | 38.1 |
| Total | 47.00 | 100.0 |

# Appendix J

## Description of Responses on Survey Question 9

How many End of Course Tests did you fail last semester?

| | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 87 | 59.2 |
| 1 | 34 | 23.1 |
| 2 | 22 | 15.0 |
| 3 | 4 | 2.7 |
| Total | 147 | 100.0 |

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